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The six-member Christian band the W's has invented its own style of music, which the members dubbed 'skid-il-ly-doo.'

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The W's 'skid-il-ly-doo' with big acts

The Corvallis Christian pop and swing band has gotten its big break

Davin Tryon
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Along with swing, fox trot, cha-cha and the waltz, make room for a little "skid-il-ly-doo."

The W's, a Christian rockabilly pop and swing band, has broken through with a style the members call "skid-il-ly-doo."

The six members, ranging in age from 19-25, have gone from playing in the Beanery on Second Street in Corvallis to touring with D.C. Talk and Jennifer Knapp on the Supernatural Tour this year.

They have been playing venues that host more than 15,000 people, and the group hopes to gain a potential 400,000-plus new fans.

New fans are not likely to know how the W's exploded onto the music scene. It was simply a case of being in the right place at the right time, said Robin Spitzer, the group's publicist.

The W's opened for Five Iron Frenzy in San Francisco a year and a half ago to fill a vacancy. After the show, they had no idea that all their unrefined demo tapes would be in such high demand.

The W's sold out of tapes and made such a good impression on Five Iron Frenzy that the band was asked to tour with them the following year.

This was a big step for a band

that only had experience playing in coffee shops and J. C.'s Pizzeria in Corvallis.

While on tour with Five Iron Frenzy and Echoing Green, the W's played every show they could as well as in a handful of festivals.

"At the beginning of the festivals, we'd be hanging out with people who had no idea of who we were," said James "Yabbo" Carter, alto saxophonist. "They were just hanging out with us. I'd ask them what band they wanted to see play, and they'd say, 'I want to see the W's.' I mean, they didn't even know I was in the band."

The group is composed of lead singer Andrew "Little A." Schar, trumpet player Brett "Smiley" Barker, tenor sax and clarinet player Val "Valentino" Hellman, bass player Todd "Rodd W." Gruener, drummer Brian "Nigel" Morris and, of course, Yabbo.

These young men have signed with 5 Minute Walk Records.

According to Valentino, they signed with a Christian label simply because in the music industry, a record contract is hard to get. The band decided to sign, but didn't know what to expect out of the contract.

5 Minute Walk Records didn't know what to expect, either, said company head Frank Tate in a recent press release.

Potential soon turned into sales exceeding the \$100,000 mark.

"Fourth From the Last" charted at #4 in August 1998 on Bill-

board's Heatseekers album chart, which lists bestselling titles by new artists who have not appeared in the top 100 of the Billboard top 200 chart.

This fast success was due to the W's offering more than what is usually associated with a "Christian band," according to the record company.

Little A's lyrics are not just about how to act in church or in Sunday school. Aside from songs like "The Devil is Bad" and "Moses," the W's lyrics could be compared to any rockabilly or swing band on the music scene today.

"We don't try to preach to the audience," Valentino said.

Other Christian bands "seem to focus on church people who are having problems, and that's great," Valentino said. "We want to reach the kinds who don't go for that kind of thing. We want to play a show and be seen as a good band."

"We're not afraid of being called Christians or of expressing our beliefs, but we do it in a different way than some people like. By making ourselves accessible to people after the show, we feel we can do a better job."

The W's became a rockabilly/swing band because Little A. liked bands such as the Squirrel Nut Zippers, Stray Cats and Glen Miller, Valentino said.

"Fourth From the Last" is available at Face the Music, House of Records, CD World and most other music stores in the Eugene area.

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